THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD):(a) No, Sir. Rail Tel has been authorized to plan cyber cafe, having telecom facilities such as Internet, E-mail, Audio/video chatting, Internet telephony etc., on franchise basis at important stations only, in a phased manner.

(b) One cyber cafe has been commissioned at New Delhi Station as a pilot project. Out of the stations, where technical feasibility to provide cyber cafes exist, it is planned to provide cyber cafes at 51 stations in Phase-I.

(c) Expenditure will depend upon the number of work stations and the type of services to be provided. On an average, a cyber cafe will cost around Rs. 6 to 7 lakhs. However, the expenditure on this account will be met by the Franchise. Railways would provide space/land area only at Railway Stations with Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) connectivity.

(d) Does not arise.

Shortage of wagon wheels

*153. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Railways has lately been saddled with over 20,000 wagons bereft of wheels;

(b) if so, the main reasons for such shortage of wheel sets and the present annual requirement of railway for the same and the total indigenous production and capacity production of such wheels per annum; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to meet the immediate requirements?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD):(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) During the current year 2004-05, the wheel requirement for rolling stock (conventional locos, coaches & wagons) has been assessed as 1,90,000 wheels. At present, there are only two indigenous manufacturers of railway wheels *i.e.* Rail Wheel Factory (RWF), Bangalore and Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP), Durgapur. RWF, Bangalore shall be supplying 95,000 wheels (as against the current production capacity

of 1,10,000 wheels) and DSP shall be supplying 60,000 wheels (as against the earlier commitment of 57,500 wheels) during the current year. Thus 1,55,000 wheels are expected to be available from indigenous sources during the current year. This leads to a shortfall of around 35,000 wheels.

The reasons for the shortfall are:

i. Shortage of indigenous railway wheel production capacity.

ii. Reduced production of wheels at RWF, Bangalore (95,000 wheels only) as against the capacity of 1,10,000 wheels on account of 72 day shut down planned for normalizing furnance maintenance.

iii. This year, there has been an additional requirement of 19,000 wheels to cater for planned increase in production of coaches and wagons as compared to last year.

Steps taken or proposed to be taken to meet the immediate requirement:

i. Durgapur Steel Plant have been impressed upon to supply additional 2500 wheels (*i.e.* 60,000 wheels as against 57,500 wheels committed for the year). They have also agreed to supply 70,000 & 80,000 wheels in 2005-06 & 2006-07 respectively.

ii. Condemning size of wagon wheels and coaching wheels has been temporarily reduced without compromising safety to tide over the crisis. This has reduced the wheel requirement during the year by 7,500 wheels (3500 wagon wheels and 4000 coaching wheels).

iii. The buffer stock available with wagon manufacturers has been reduced. This has made available additional 6600 wheels.

iv. Finalised and earlier loco wheel tender at risk and cost for importing 3600 wheels.

v. In the long run, Government proposes to set up another railway wheel manufacutring plant to augment the indigenous production capacity to take care of Indian Railways rising demand as well as the existing shortage in indigenous production capacity.